SPORT

Undav helps Stuttgart sink Gladbach and go fourth

BERLIN: Deniz Undav made it 11 goals in 12 Bundesliga matches as VfB Stuttgart cruised to a 3-0 victory at Borussia Moenchengladbach on Saturday to climb to fourth.

The German Cup holders barely broke a sweat against a poor Gladbach side, who are on the slide having lost four of their past six games.

Stuttgart are only behind third-placed Hoffenheim, who have a game in hand, on goal difference.

Gladbach's Haris Tabakovic missed an early penalty before Stuttgart's Jamie Leweling scored the opener.

After Joe Scally bundled the ball into his own net, substitute Undav sealed the match with a late strike.

Tabakovic's limp penalty was easily stopped by Germany goalkeeper Alexander Nuebel with 13 minutes gone.

It was the Bosnian's second missed spot-kick in three months.

Gladbach dropped their heads and Stuttgart pounced, Leweling dancing through the penalty area before blasting home on the half-hour mark.

Undav's introduction in the 61st minute proved key as the ball bounced in off Scally's back while he tried to mark the German international at a corner.

Undav then added one of his own with 23 minutes remaining, piloting a low shot into the bottom corner.

Earlier on Sunday, former Manchester City striker Edin Dzeko scored on his debut with second-tier Schalke in a 2-2 home draw with Kaiserslautern, helping his side maintain a two-point lead at the top of the table.

Signing from Fiorentina on Friday, the 39-year-old Dzeko came off the bench late on and scored with three minutes remaining to become the oldest goalscorer in Bundesliga 2 history.

In Saturday's late match, Borussia Dortmund powered past hosts Union Berlin 3-0 to cut the gap to leaders Bayern Munich, while also tightening their hold on second place with their third straight league win.

Dortmund captain Emre Can converted his 10th-minute penalty after Serhou Guirassy was brought down, to put the visitors in the driving seat.

Nico Schlotterbeck then rose higher than all of his markers at the far post to head the ball into the top corner and double their lead in the 53rd.

Union rarely managed to get into the Dortmund box despite splitting possession with their opponents, and unsuccessfully tried their luck with long-range efforts.

Guirassy should have added another goal in the 83rd but instead fired over the bar from two metres out. Maximilian Beier made amends a minute later with a low shot to make sure of the three points.

The win lifted the Ruhr valley club to 42 points, eight behind Bayern, who suffered their first league defeat of the season when they conceded two late goals to slump to a shock 2-1 loss to visitors Augsburg in their Bavarian derby earlier on Saturday. Hoffenheim, with a game in hand, are third on 36.

Dortmund next host Inter Milan in the Champions League on Wednesday for their final league-phase match and a shot at a spot for the knockout stage.—Agencies

BARCELONA: Barcelona's Lamine Yamal (C) scores during the La Liga match against Real Oviedo at Camp Nou on Sunday.—Reuters

Yamal nets stunner as Barca beat Oviedo to reclaim top spot

BARCELONA: Barcelona reclaimed top spot in La Liga with a 3-0 win over Real Oviedo on Sunday, thanks to goals from Dani Olmo, Raphinha and an acrobatic Lamine Yamal effort.

After Real Madrid beat Villarreal on Saturday to take pole position overnight, the Catalans edged a point ahead again.

Although Oviedo are bottom of the table with just two victories all season, Barca had to scrap for their victory as the visitors worked hard defensively to keep Hansi Flick's team at bay until the second half.

Eventually the hosts' quality told at the partially-reopened Camp Nou and after Olmo opened the scoring Barca never looked back.

The pick of the goals was Yamal's strike, an impressive volley from Olmo's cross to secure Barca's triumph.

They struggled to make inroads in a dry first half and their passing was unusually imprecise.

Injured midfield maestro Pedri Gonzalez watched on from the stands with an unimpressed expression.

Oviedo looked to attack on the counter and Haissem Hassan drew a save from Joan Garcia from long distance.

At the other end Aaron Escandell made a fine stop at his near post to thwart Raphinha before half-time.

Barca came out with renewed energy for the second half and soon took the lead.

After Yamal and Raphinha pressed well in the box the ball broke loose to Olmo, who steered home.

Oviedo gave away a poor second goal after 57 minutes, with Raphinha running on to an undercooked back-pass from David Costas and lofting the ball over Escandell.

Barcelona's third was expertly taken by Yamal, as Olmo's cross was falling behind him he produced an eye-catching sideways scissor-kick to wrap up the victory.

A huge downpour hit the stadium, sending fans scurrying as there is no roof added yet, and those who remained saw Escandell deny Robert Lewandowski a potential fourth with a fine save.

Earlier on Sunday, Atletico Madrid cruised to a 3-0 victory over relegation-threatened Mallorca, with Alexander Sorloth, an own goal by David Lopez and a strike from substitute Thiago Almada ensuring Diego Simeone's side leapfrogged Villarreal into third place in the standings.Atletico moved on to 44 points, three ahead of Villarreal.

MBAPPE AT THE DOUBLE

On Saturday, Kylian Mbappe netted twice to earn Real Madrid a 2-0 win at Villarreal.

La Liga's top scorer Mbappe reached 21 goals for the season in the competition to help Real see off a spirited Villarreal side, who are now fourth.

Arbeloa's side have won three consecutive matches across all competitions and victory at Villarreal could be a vital step in the revival of their season.

After the shock Copa del Rey defeat at second-tier Albacete in Arbeloa's first match at the helm just 10 days ago after replacing Xabi Alonso, his side have started to take shape.

The coach has made clear how important his star players are and none has been more crucial this season than French superstar Mbappe, who has netted 34 times across all competitions.

Mbappe and Vinicius Jr "are the best players in the world, they are players who can really unbalance teams, we try to get the ball to them as much as possible," Arbeloa told Real Madrid TV.

"They're two players who... I'm really happy to have in this state of form and above all, because of the great work they are doing.

"They are really committed to the team, they are the first who are pressing... they're giving this effort and solidarity that we need from them, so I'm very happy that their reward comes in the form of goals."

Vinicius is still struggling goal scoring touch as the 25-year-old Brazil forward went a 13th straight La Liga match without getting on the score sheet, but was involved as Mbappe found the net two minutes into the second half.

"They are a nightmare for defences," said Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. "I hope they can keep bringing joy."

Villarreal are now 10 points behind Real, having played one fewer match than Arbeloa's side.

"We have to be a bit more accurate in attack against these kinds of teams," admitted Villarreal midfielder Alberto Moleiro.

Elsewhere, fifth-placed Espanyol fell to a 3-2 defeat at Valencia that left them seven points behind Villarreal.—Agencies

Ronaq claims 1000 Guineas of Pakistan Cup

LAHORE: The bay filly Ronaq produced a stunning front-running performance to clinch the 1000 Guineas of Pakistan Cup, the richest race for four-year-old fillies, here at the Lahore Racecourse on Sunday.

Trained by Aleem-ud-Din and ridden by jockey Awais Anjum, Ronaq dominated the 1600-metre contest from start to finish in a display of sheer speed and stamina.

The day belonged to jockey Awais Anjum, who secured a hat-trick of cup victories.

He first guided the bay colt Jupiter to win the Stewards Cup in the fourth race.

He then followed with his triumph on Ronaq in the fifth race and completed the treble by riding Couch House Candy to victory in the Anarkali Cup in the sixth race.

Both Jupiter and Couch House Candy are trained by champion trainer Rashid Latif.—Aftab Gilani

Hoey breaks 800m indoor world record in Boston

NEW YORK: American Josh Hoey shattered the men's 800 metres short track world record at the Indoor Grand Prix in Boston on Saturday, clocking 1:42.50 to break a mark that stood for over 28 years.

Hoey took 0.17 seconds off the previous record of 1:42.67 set by Denmark's Wilson Kipketer at the World Indoor Championships in Paris in 1997, adding another highlight to a breakout indoor season that included a world 600m short track best set in Boston seven weeks ago.

Already the second-fastest indoor 800m runner of all time after setting a North American record 1:43.24 at last year's US Indoor Championships in New York, Hoey was paced by his brother Jaxson and surged clear late to win by more than two seconds.

Jaxson led him through 200 metres in 24.81 and 400 in 50.21 before stepping aside, with Hoey passing 600 in 1:16.19 and holding on until the line.

"We did a lot of pacing work," Hoey was quoted as saying by World Athletics. "Just kind of kept steadily improving, taking it week-by-week, block-by-block, and we were able to make this work."

Earlier on the card, American Hobbs Kessler set a 2000m short track world best of 4:48.79 to beat the previous mark of 4:49.99 set by Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele almost 19 years ago.

"Oh, that felt so good," Kessler said after what was, for him, a redemptive run.

"I was super-deeply disappointed with how last summer went," he said "I didn't make the US team, I ran poorly at Diamond Leagues, and it was really hard to get training again because I worked really hard and I figured nothing came of it."

US distance runner Grant Fisher, the world short track 3000m record-holder, finished second in 4:49.48.

Sprint star Noah Lyles opened his season in the rarely raced 300m. The Olympic 100m gold medalist, also a four-time World Champion at 200m, Lyles finished second in 32.15, edged out on the line by his training partner from Trinidad and Tobago, Jareem Richards (32.14).

Jamaican Ackeem Blake won the men's 60m in 6:53sec. Eloy Benitez of Puerto Rico was second in 6:56, just edging out American Jordan Anthony, who was third in 6:57.

Britain's Dina Asher-Smith won the women's 60m in 7.08.—Agencies

Vine takes second Tour Down Under crown

ADELAIDE: British sprinter Matthew Brennan swept to victory in Sunday's final stage as Jay Vine survived a high-speed collision with a straying kangaroo to win his second Tour Down Under.

Brennan, 20, coming off a breakthrough season with 14 wins for Team Visma last year, finished a misfiring week with a Tour Down Under stage win from New Zealand's Finn Fisher-Black (Red Bull-Bora Hansgrohe) and Denmark's Tobias Lund Andresen (Decathlon CAM CGM).

Vine overcame a torrid final day of the UCI World Tour season opener finishing with just two of his six UAE Emirates team-mates to support him after he ploughed into a kangaroo and came off his bike with 95 kilometres left of the hilly 169.8km fifth stage into Stirling in the Adelaide Hills.

Vine's victory following his 2023 Tour Down Under success was a testament to his resilience and toughness to overcome setbacks, including the loss of his team-mate and defending champion Jhonatan Narvaez in a crash in Saturday's penultimate stage.

The Australian protected his 1min3sec advantage to win the race from Swiss Mauro Schmid (Team Jayco AlUla) with another nine seconds to Australia's Harry Sweeny (EF Education-Easypost) in third.

"We started the week off positive but we just had more and more bad luck as the race went on and today was never going to be easy," Vine said.

"Two kangaroos blasted through the peloton as we were doing 50km/h and I ended up hitting one of them. Luckily, I am okay and happy to be able to hold on to the leader's jersey and take the overall."

Vine praised the unstinting support work of his British team-mate Adam Yates who helped position him after his fall. After switching to two replacement bikes, he managed to stay with the pack and finish without further mishap.

For Brennan, it was a morale-boosting performance in Australia heading into the rest of the World Tour season.

"We have been disappointed with this week's results and to finish it off today I am very happy," Brennan said.

"Today, we nailed everything that we wanted to do and so leading on to the next races and the classics,it's good to open the mind up to things like that."—AFP

ADELAIDE: UAE Team Emirates XRG's Australian rider Jay Vine holds the winners trophy at the end of the Tour Down Under on Sunday.—AFP

Bangladesh says star cricketer Shakib can return

DHAKA: Bangladesh cricket chiefs have reopened the door for ex-captain Shakib Al Hasan's return, a star player but who was also a lawmaker in the former ruling party overthrown in a 2024 uprising.

Shakib's links to ousted leader Sheikh Hasina made him a target of public anger, and he was among dozens facing murder investigations for a deadly police crackdown on protesters.

The all-rounder announced his retirement from international cricket in 2024, but said he would like to reverse that decision last month.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) senior official Amzad Hossain said he could play again.

"The board has taken a unanimous decision that if Shakib Al Hasan's availability, fitness and accessibility allow it — and if he can be present at the venue where matches are played — then the board and the selection panel will consider him for the national team," Hossain told reporters late Saturday.

He added that the BCB would issue Shakib no-objection certificates (NOC) to play in overseas leagues.

"If he wants to participate in other global tournaments, the board will provide him NOC as required," Amzad added.

Shakib had earlier apologised for remaining silent during the student-led uprising but defended his decision to serve the regime it toppled.

Shakib was playing in a domestic Twenty20 cricket competition in Canada when Hasina's government collapsed and has not returned to Bangladesh since.—AFP

Senegal goal hero admits AFCON final walk-off was 'a mistake'

PARIS: Senegal's Pape Gueye opened up about his team's walk off at the Africa Cup of Nations final and Morocco's subsequent missed penalty in an interview on French television on Sunday.

Gueye scored the winning goal as Senegal edged Morocco 1-0 in extra time in a controversial game in Rabat last week.

Morocco were awarded a late penalty sparking a walk-off from the eventual winners, leading to a 20-minute delay.

When Senegal came back Brahim Diaz fluffed his penalty, while Gueye scored the winner in extra-time.

"We are only human, we realised our mistake and came back out," said the 26-year-old midfielder Gueye. "Anyone can make a mistake," he added.

Gueye praised former Liverpool star Sadio Mane, who remained on the pitch and urged his team-mates to return to the game for the penalty.

Senegal were already furious at having a goal disallowed for a soft-looking foul minutes earlier.

"He found the right thing to say at the right moment and it shows just how important he is to us," he said. "We owe him a big thank you."

Gueye also expressed surprise that Diaz dared attempt a panenka penalty that went badly wrong.

"It was daring and I would not have risked that myself," he said.

The Moroccan Football Federation has formally referred the walkout and supporters' behaviour to the Confederation of African Football (CAF), which organises AFCON and FIFA.—AFP

MARSEILLE: Olympique de Marseille's Amine Gouiri (second L) scores during the Ligue 1 match against RC Lens at Orange Velodrome.—Reuters

Nwaneri scores on Marseille debut as Lens lose top spot

PARIS: Ethan Nwaneri struck 13 minutes into his Olympique de Marseille debut after joining on loan from Arsenal to help his new club to a 3-1 win over high-flying RC Lens in Ligue 1 on Saturday.

Amine Gouiri's deflected effort put Marseille ahead early at the Velodrome and 18-year-old Nwaneri soon doubled the lead.

The England under-21 international gathered the ball just inside his own half and advanced unchallenged towards the edge of the Lens box, shifting inside onto his left foot and sweeping home from 20 yards.

Gouiri netted again on 75 minutes to all but seal victory, tapping in a cross from Timothy Weah, before Lens grabbed a consolation through substitute Rayan Fofana.

"It's a really great night," Gouiri told broadcaster Ligue 1+. "The new signings have settled in well — you could feel it. We wanted to climb back up the table and put in a good performance, and that's what we did."

Nwaneri joined Marseille on Friday until the end of the season after struggling for minutes for the Premier League leaders this term following a breakthrough 2024-25 campaign, in which he scored nine times and earned a new five-year deal with the Gunners.

Roberto De Zerbi left out the league's top scorer Mason Greenwood for the visit of Lens, in a bid to keep him fresh for Wednesday's vital Champions League trip to Club Brugge.

Instead, he thrust Nwaneri straight into the team along with fellow new signing Quinten Timber, the twin brother of Arsenal defender Jurrien, against a side who had won eight in a row and 11 of their past 12 games to mount an unexpected title challenge alongside Paris St-Germain.

Lens had managed to maintain their one-point lead in recent weeks but reigning French and European champions PSG climbed above them on Friday after a 1-0 win at Auxerre.

"We want to push for a European spot. Losing tonight doesn't call that or our good start to the season into question," said Lens coach Pierre Sage.

"I'm almost certain we'll lose other matches, and when that happens we'll have to get back to performing."

Meanwhile, AS Monaco's problems showed few signs of abating as they drew 0-0 at Le Havre to leave the principality club with just one victory in nine outings, dropping them down into 10th place.

Elsewhere, Lorient extended their unbeaten run in the league to eight games with a 2-0 win at Rennes, who passed up the opportunity to move into Champions League places.—AFP